



Talking Points and FAQs Business Leaders Task Force on Homelessness

Framing Points

We welcome the City Council's and Board of Supervisors' partnership on ending homelessness, and recognize this is truly a state of emergency.

- Home For Good, the Los Angeles Business Leaders Taskforce on Homelessness has been working since 2010 to end homelessness in Los Angeles, beginning with chronic and veteran homelessness.
- But in major cities all across America, we have seen a sudden spike in street homelessness over the last year.
- That has certainly been true here in Los Angeles as well, and seeing the most recent homeless count, we recognize that in order to truly end homelessness, we need to secure resources on the order of \$100s of millions, not the \$10s of millions we've been dealing in.

While the magnitude of the issue has grown, core solutions remain the same.

- We have engineered solutions, seen tremendous progress, and secured important victories over the past four years.
- As awful as the present situation is, it would be even worse but for the work that has taken place – 23,000 chronically homeless persons and veterans have already been permanently housed in less than 5 years.
- Just to put that accomplishment into perspective, Utah, which has been touted for ending chronic homelessness across its state, had fewer than 2,000 chronically homeless persons counted when it began its effort 10 years ago.

Los Angeles is widely regarded as a national leader now, and we should build on what we have done.

- When Home For Good first began, Los Angeles was routinely disregarded and was widely seen as being fragmented and dysfunctional. Public and private funders in homelessness avoided investments for such reasons.
- That reputation has completely changed, and we are now a collective of over 100 nonprofits, over 20 public and private funders, and nearly 15,000 Angelenos walking and working to end homelessness.
- Los Angeles is now seen as a prime innovator amidst its immense challenges, for example, our development of the coordinated entry system is a model for the rest of the nation.

Our expertise allows us to advise others on ways to both end and manage homelessness more sustainably.

- Our focus has been on permanent housing for chronically homeless persons and veterans. As a result, we have been able to observe the most effective ways people exit homelessness from interim solutions.

To end homelessness, we need more permanent housing resources and the staffing that supports those resources.

- The ONLY way someone exits homelessness is if they find a home. Given Los Angeles' present rental market, housing costs, and the relative vulnerability of our homeless population, without sufficient funding for permanent housing resources, everything else will be for naught.
- And while you cannot even begin to end or even manage homelessness without the housing and housing vouchers themselves, they are not sufficient. To deploy them quickly and truly extend the reach of the Coordinated Entry System (CES), we need more outreach staff, housing navigators, support staff, and move-in funds.
- We are refining the specific cost of these various component pieces and would be happy to help provide those figures.

To manage homelessness, we need protocols in shelter and partnerships in encampment cleanup that make them a more effective pathway out of homelessness.

- Simply adding more shelter beds will not necessarily change the visual landscape of homelessness in the ways you may expect.
- Many homeless individuals that have the largest encampments or are most visible will refuse to enter shelter for reasons of discomfort, inability to follow rules, and concerns of safety.
- Encampment cleanups will often result in the encampment returning to the same or nearby location after 1-4 weeks. It is an expensive recurring cycle.
- However, shelter and even encampment cleanup can play an invaluable role in someone's journey home if they are offered at the right juncture and in partnership with CES.

Offering other alternatives such as rapid rehousing subsidies and money for security deposits are other immediate alternatives to traditional shelter.

- Rapid rehousing is the newer, more effective form of transitional housing where you help pay a shrinking portion of someone's rent in their new housing and send follow-up support.
- There are homeless persons receiving disability payments or even with a job but unable to pay the security deposit to move into an affordable apartment.

These strategies cannot be accomplished via one-time allocations but will require annual appropriations.

- Los Angeles, like New York, needs a permanent source of funding for housing and supportive services to create and sustain an end to homelessness.
- Part of why we welcome this local declaration of an emergency by the City of Los Angeles is that we need local funding to bolster and supplement the federal funding we have been receiving.

CES FAQs

1. I heard CES is designed for, and only works for, chronically homeless people?

- **No:** Although CES was first tested by connecting highly vulnerable persons with permanent supportive housing, it was always built with the intent to be used by all populations for all housing types and resources.
- **CES is a Switchboard, Not One Singular Path:** CES is NOT a system that only prioritizes one kind of person over another, it simply matches users to the housing they are most likely to succeed in with whatever resources are available (including shelter). For example, rapid rehousing resources are matched to persons that score lower on the assessment while Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) resources are matched to persons that score higher.

2. Then why does CES reserve PSH resources for those who score highest?

- **Cost Effectiveness, Optimal Use:** PSH is cost effective, but it is not free or the least expensive option. Housing someone in PSH is only 40% cheaper than leaving them on the streets if you house the right person. Otherwise, you end up providing someone with more intensive services and subsidies than he/she requires to be successful. 60-80% of persons who experience homelessness are homeless for a short-time once and never again. Were we to provide everyone who experiences homeless with a lengthy rental subsidy, it would quickly bankrupt the system. Putting the right person into PSH is just as important as creating more of it.
- **Improvement on Prior Practice:** When assessing the service needs of those who would have entered PSH housing in the previous first-come-first served model, we have found in some instances that up to 90% of those lined up to enter did not require that intensity of service.

3. So why aren't more people being housed?

- **Lack of Housing:** There is not the necessary supply of affordable housing or housing subsidies for everyone who needs it. It is as simple as that.

4. But it's taking longer to house the same people, isn't it?

- **On the Whole, No:** Most agencies operated with processes that favored program participants over external referrals. Sometimes, this created efficiencies at the cost of effectiveness – not always extending the opportunity to the person who might need it most in that community. As agencies adjust to CES protocols, there certainly are growing pains, but for agencies and communities in under-served communities, CES has dramatically increased housing opportunities and speed.
- **Spotlight on Inefficiencies:** CES has also served to highlight lingering inefficiencies in the housing process – items such as housing applications, the housing search, inspection, and criminal

background check. Some of the frustrations with delays in “CES” are actually processes outside of CES that have been highlighted through the transparencies now afforded in CES.

- **Insufficient Outreach Funding:** One significant process that has had historic underinvestment is street outreach. Los Angeles has a fraction of the street outreach staffing that New York City has, which means responding to requests for street engagement takes longer and is much more limited. Just like a police or fire department, the time it takes to respond to a request or emergency is directly linked to the levels of staffing.
- **Technology:** One major component of CES that we do acknowledge as hampering efficiency is the technology. CES is now being hosted on the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority’s (LAHSA) Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), but core functions are not yet online. We anticipate a much greater degree of automation and improved contact management with ongoing improvements to the database.

5. Technology? I heard CES is being conducted on pen and paper?

- **Preference vs. Limitation:** It is true that the great majority of case managers and outreach workers are administering the CES Survey via a paper form. However, this is mostly due to equipment cost, to maintain rapport, and safety considerations vs. technological limitations. HMIS can, in fact, be accessed via a tablet or a mobile PC.
- **Electronic Database:** Also, even when the survey is being administered by paper, it is still later entered and shared through HMIS for the purposes of matching. While automated matching is not yet operational, regional coordinators use flat files generated via HMIS to evaluate matches.

6. Aren’t you taking power away from the case manager?

- **Returning Case Management to Core Skills:** Previously, a huge part of a case manager’s job was remembering the great multitude of various housing options and requirements, much less evaluating how his or her client might fit those options. Not surprisingly, case managers would not know about all the options available or would misevaluate options they were aware of. Not only did this impact a client’s success, it meant they had far less time for the most important function of their job: preparing and supporting their clients for the housing opportunity.
- **Retaining Choice:** Also, CES participants and case managers are not bound by the housing offers they receive. They are able to decline as many matches to housing as they would like without penalty. They can also note any preferences on the CES Survey.

7. What does success for CES mean?

- **A New Normal:** Since CES is not a program but a platform for programs to function more effectively, CES will have achieved success when it fades into the background, with its principles of collaboration, effective and efficient matching of resources, process tracking, and transparency now for granted.
- **Full participation:** CES is at its best when everyone is on it – including professional homeless agencies, volunteer outfits, soup lines, clinics, and anyone else that interacts with persons experiencing homelessness.

- **Full Funding:** While the skeleton exists, many of its efficiencies have not been fully achieved due to understaffing.
- **Diverse Resources:** CES can be used to deploy any and all resources that support stability in housing including non-housing resources like employment training and even services like benefits enrollment.
- **Process Improvement:** Transparency and data tracking over time allows CES to highlight gaps and opportunities that should be taken advantage of to reduce process time and the quality of services delivered.